

## OUTCOME MEASUREMENT GLOSSARY

*Note: Terms are listed in alphabetical order.*

**Activities** Programs or services (such as tutoring, lectures, storytelling) provided to the end user by the library. The specific jobs (such as recruiting and training volunteers, publicizing a lecture series) are called *tasks*. **Answers the question:** “**What does the library do?**”

**Candidate Outcomes** are potential outcomes that must be verified before they are used. Usually the result of brainstorming and assumptions by library staff members, candidate outcomes must be checked with participants and others before being accepted as appropriate or correct measures of a program.

**Community Goals** relate to the needs of the community and are beyond the scope of the library alone; the library’s program is usually one part of a larger effort to meet a community goal. (For example, increase school readiness among elementary school children, decrease juvenile delinquency in teens, increase socialization by isolated elders) **Answers the question:** “**What does the community hope to achieve in response to an identified community need?**”

**Data Collection** is the process of collecting information for use in evaluation. The most common methods are surveys, interviews, pre and post-testing, professional observation, self-report and review of existing records.

**Evaluation** Measurement or verification of outcomes using the indicators in relation to the set targets.

**Goals** In evaluation, there are two types of goals. Both are developed in response to a demonstrated need, broad in scope and long range. In *traditional evaluation*, goals reflect the mission of the library. In *outcomes measurement*, goals reflect the ultimate impacts desired for the targeted users, and usually relate to larger community goals. **Answers the question:** “**What does the library hope to achieve for the users ?**”

**Indicators** Measurable characteristics or changes that indicate achievement of the outcome. Behaviors which demonstrate changes in knowledge, skills, behavior, or attitudes -- or that imply such changes. The amount of expected change is part of the indicator. (E.g. increase in one reading level within one year; ability to use a database independently; successful completion of sample citizenship exam). To gauge success for the *participant*. **Answers the question:** “**What does the user say or do that reveals the achievement of the intended outcome?**” and “**What will we measure that indicates the achievement?**”

**Inputs** Resources (such as money, staff, volunteers, facilities, collections, community partners) used to plan and provide a program or service. Also constraints on a program such as laws, regulations, funding requirements. **Answers the question:** “**What assets do we have to work with?**”

**Interim outcomes** Milestones in the life of a project, events that are necessary for successful outcomes. Points at which project staff must decide whether to continue current activities or to modify them in order to achieve the desired outcomes. (E.g. In a family literacy project with the desired outcome of increasing family reading at home, attendance at library story times may be considered necessary. So the number of participants signing up for the first story time may be a milestone in the project.) *Sometimes called initial, short-term or intermediate outcomes.* **Answers the question:** “**What is the short-term benefit to the user?**” and “**What will the user do that is necessary if s/he is to reach the long-term outcome?**”

**Objective** Also known as an *outcome measure statement*. A summary statement of what the program will measure for a specified outcome. Written as % and # of specific participants + will + indicator verb + quantity of indicator + timeframe. E.g. “75% (112) of program participants will double the amount of time reading to their children during the six month program.”

**Outcomes** Benefits to the *end user* that demonstrate the effectiveness of the program or service. Usually are changes in knowledge, skills, behavior, attitude, or condition. Also called *impacts* or *results*. **Answers the questions:** “**So what?**” and “**What difference did our program make to the participant?**”

**Outcome Measure Statement** *Synonym for objective.*

**Outcome Measurement** A user-centered approach to planning and assessment. Also known as *outcome evaluation*, *outcomes-based evaluation*, *outcomes assessment*, or *results-based evaluation*.

**Outcome Measurement Plan** Description of the library goal, the participants the program expects to affect, inputs, services, outputs, outcomes, indicators, targets, and data collection methods for the entire program. Sometimes called a *logic model*.

**Outputs** Units of service or product resulting from the inputs and activities of the library. Volume of successful activities or evidence of service delivery. Objectively quantified measures (such as number of books circulated, number of hours devoted to homework assistance, or number of attendees at an author reading). **Answers the question:** “**How much did the library do?**”

**Short term outcomes** See *interim outcomes*.

**Targets** Numerical standards or criteria of success for your program. Them expected number and proportion of participants who will achieve the outcome. (E.g. 75% (50) of participants report a stronger sense of community six months after a program; 20% (12) of attendees at resume writing workshops report getting job interviews). Targets are used to gauge success of the *library's program*. **Answers the question: "How will we know that our program is a success?"**

**Tasks** The specific jobs (such as recruiting and training volunteers or publicizing a lecture series) staff or volunteers must do to be able to provide successful programs or services.